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A

CALM REVIEW

OF THE

MEASURES EMPLOYED

IN THE

Religious Awakening in Boston,

IN 1842.

BEING A DISCOURSE DELIVERED IN BOWDOIN SQUARE CHURCH,

JUNE 28, 1846.

BY R. W. CUSHMAN.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

For the views which the following Discourse contains, and for their publication, the author alone is responsible. He has consulted no one in preparing them, that no one might suffer from having been concerned in their utterance. Having given them from the pulpit, he publishes them that he may be understood; and that they may have whatever influence they may be entitled to, in favor of the true and the right. Let them be canvassed by those who differ on them; as truth *cannot*, so charity *need not*, suffer by the scrutiny.

DISCOURSE.

WHEN I HAD WAITED, I SAID I WILL ANSWER ALSO MY PART; I
ALSO WILL SHOW MINE OPINION.—*Job*, xxxii. 16, 17.

SEVERAL years have now passed away since this city was the scene of events affecting the interests of religion, concerning the nature, means, and tendencies of which good men have differed.

As this church is known to have been committed as an agency in those events, it may be supposed that its pastor has not been indifferent or inattentive to the influence which they have had on the cause of pure religion, and especially on the religious interest intrusted to his care.

His object is to review, somewhat, the course pursued, and to trace its effects on the community and on the churches,—our own among the number,—for it is a question of the gravest importance to ourselves.

It is now about six years since the commencement of this religious interest. The enterprise was begun with the design of erecting a house of worship adapted to meet the improved architectural taste of the day, and of gathering a church, which, in its ministry and

measures, should commend to the conviction and acceptance of men, the doctrines and ordinances of the Gospel, as understood and practised by the regular churches of the Baptist denomination.

The house was erected at an expense of about seventy thousand dollars. So heavy an undertaking could have been entered upon only under the influence of the strongest motives, and could have been brought to completion only by the excitement of the highest hopes. It was believed, that the pecuniary sacrifice which was made with so good an aim, would be followed with the tokens of both the Divine and the public approbation; that a favorable knowledge of the sentiments and order of our churches, — but little understood by the greater portion of the community, — would be extended; and that a people would ere long be gathered in this place, whose numbers, piety, intelligence and means, would form a powerful instrumentality for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom.

These expectations have been but imperfectly realized. On the contrary, it is a fact which has been long proclaimed by some of the most prominent of our own number, that they have been disappointed; and it has been added, with prophetic earnestness, that the course we have been pursuing has brought on us the frown of God, and grieved away his Spirit.

This charge is certainly a very grave one; and if it be true, our individual safety, and the salvation of those around us who remain unaffected by the Gospel, demand that we should humble ourselves before God, and change our method of action.

What will be said with reference to this question, will of course express the views of the speaker. How

far they will accord with those of his hearers, he knows not; nor is he very sanguine in the hope of effecting a change in the views of any who are known to differ from him. They will at least define his own position, however. They are given at the request of esteemed brethren, who have thought that a frank expression of them will, in that respect, do good, if in no other. It has been his own judgment, for several years, that the interests of the church and his own usefulness demanded such an expression; but he yielded to the judgment of brethren whose views have differed from his own, and has submitted to have his own stated by others, rather than appear to disregard their wishes.

But the time has now come, in the judgment of all, when it is proper for me to speak. And, having waited three years in silence, while others have been very freely speaking both their sentiments and their animadversions, "I said I will answer also my part; I also will show mine opinion."

An impression has been given, that I am unfriendly to religious revivals; that I am opposed to the measures which are adapted to produce them; and that I do not stand, with respect to them, on the ground which was occupied by the denomination in the days of our ministerial fathers. I will, therefore, first state what are my views of Christian truth affecting these points.

I believe, then, that the nature of man is fallen and corrupt, and that, without the remedy which the Gospel of Christ presents, there is no salvation for him. I believe that the death of Christ has so met the demands of the justice of God, that repentance for sin, and an abandonment of it, secure forgiveness to him who seeks it in the name and for the sake of Christ. I believe

that the truth which God has made known respecting Himself and our relation to Him, and respecting His method of salvation by the gift of His Son, is the appointed means of working the change in us, which is necessary to salvation, and that the Christian ministry was appointed to press that truth on the attention of men.

I believe, nevertheless, that the truth, although it may be distinctly understood, will fail of producing the effect necessary to salvation, without the influence of the Holy Spirit. I believe that some, to whom it is distinctly presented, do reject it; and that *all* would reject it, if the Holy Spirit did not apply it so as to change the heart. I believe that God, — in order, perhaps, to vindicate his sovereignty, and to secure proper dispositions and tempers in the subjects of his government, — sometimes gives the influence of His Spirit, and at others withholds it.

I believe, however, that He has authorized us to proceed in the work of pressing the truth on the attention and consciences of men, with an animating confidence that the Holy Spirit will apply it, although he may not do so at the time when it is presented, or in the way he may have done in other instances of conversion. I believe that in some ages of the Church, and in some countries, the Spirit's renovating power has been manifested differently from what it has in others; and that, consequently, cases of conversion are sometimes scattered along the track of time, in any particular community having the means of grace, in such a way that there is no special excitement of the public attention to the subject of religion; while, at others, the same means of grace have unwonted efficacy, through the presence

and power of the Spirit, and conversions cluster. But, while I believe all this, I also believe there are many other things, besides the influence of the Holy Spirit — such as sympathy fear and remorse — which may give a temporary power to truth ; so that the work of the Holy Spirit can be known with certainty, only by the fruits, which are the growth of time.

These being, as I conceive, the general facts with regard to the agency and means of salvation, the following consequences flow from them :

First. The truths declared in the Gospel should be brought to the minds of men, and pressed upon their consciences. But,

Secondly. Great care should be taken *how* they are presented and pressed.

They are the means by which the soul is brought into a state of safety. As far as possible, therefore, they should be brought to the minds and consciences of all men on earth. In any given Christian community, there is the general obligation of making all, of whatever age or character, acquainted with them, and of conveying them to their minds, through whatever ignorance or error may obstruct them, so that they may be distinctly understood, and the conviction wrought, that they *are* the truths of God's word. This obligation rests on those who are in possession of the truth, not on any one portion of them exclusively, — as the ministry, for example, — but *on all*, according as they have ability and opportunity.

On the second point, — namely, the *manner* of presenting and pressing Gospel truth, — I have said great care should be exercised. This is necessary, both because God will be honored in the salvation of men,

and because of influences which may prevent the truth from being duly considered and rightly understood, and its personal application felt.

The importance of this last consideration will be seen, if we suppose a religious clerk, apprentice or domestic, observing his master or employer ignorant of his real condition, and trusting to his morality for salvation, should tell him that he is a sinner, and in danger of eternal damnation !

This is bringing before him a grave truth of Christian doctrine, and a truth which he must see and feel before he can become a Christian. But the announcement of it, and especially coming from such a source, may be received as an accusation and an insult. And it certainly will be, if it be not stated at a most favorable opportunity, and in a most unassuming manner. And even then, it is quite likely that the blunt statement of the naked truth to a man the tenor of whose life is more favorable to self-complacency than to self-reproach, will fail to do him good. Inspiration has told us, that "he that *winneth* souls is wise ;" and that even the earnestness that would pluck the most abandoned, as a brand from the burning, is the earnestness of compassion.

Perhaps I have said sufficient, in the way of laying down the landmarks of my faith, to serve for explaining my past course.

It is known, to some, at least, of those who hear me, that I did not concur in the invitation extended to the ✓ Rev. Mr. Knapp, to labor as an evangelist in Boston, and that I disapproved of his introduction to this pulpit.

Independent of anything objectionable in his principles, or in the practices of his ministry, it was my con-

viction, that the permanent religious interests of this city, and especially of this Church, could be best promoted by the means of grace which the Churches already possessed.

Although a large proportion of the inhabitants of Boston had forsaken an evangelical ministry, and another large and increasing portion had abandoned all religion whatever, yet the influence which was accorded to the ministry, when in its appropriate sphere, was extremely propitious to effective labor. The people of this community had been trained to venerate the pulpit. The most irreligious would bear the faithful dealing of those whom the suffrages of their fellow-citizens had called to fill the office of their religious instructors ; and a minister had only to become known as an intelligent and a good man, moved by the impulse of love to his fellow-creatures, and he might press home the most humbling doctrines of the Gospel, without closing the ear or rousing against himself the ill-feeling of the most heterodox in faith or the most irreligious in life. The deference paid to the ministry of Stillman, and of Baldwin after he became known, is a proof of the correctness of this statement.

Such was the advantage which the regular ministry of this city possessed for the faithful discharge of its duties.

It was with these convictions, that, after having for thirteen and a half years refused every inducement to enter into the pastoral office in other places, or to enter the service of public institutions of learning, I consented to relinquish one of the most independent of situations, and, at a sacrifice (measured by an average of many preceding years) of more than twelve hundred dollars per annum, to become the pastor of a church in Boston.

With these convictions, I could not believe that it was necessary to resort to extraordinary instrumentalities, or that it was judicious to surrender the pulpits of the city to stranger gifts and unwonted measures. And the opportunity which I had had of forming an opinion, before this pulpit was surrendered to another, had only strengthened these convictions.

When I entered on my duties, the attendance was small, and a congregation had to be gathered. But the attendance regularly and rapidly increased ; and when the new measures were resolved on, the house was so full that scarcely any accommodations, even in the remotest parts of the galleries, were to be obtained. The income of the society rose beyond all the current expenses, and the payment of the interest of a debt of thirty thousand dollars;* notwithstanding the burden of a tax, on the pews, of five quarters to the year. The attendance on our worship was composed of people of every variety of religious sentiment; who came, expecting, of course, to hear stated the views of the gospel which we take of it, and seemed willing to consider them.

Beyond all these grounds of encouragement, there were decided indications that the word preached was profiting those who heard it. It was listened to with earnest attention. A stillness and seriousness pervaded the vast assembly, which betokened the presence of the Spirit of God; and I felt the assurance that we had nearly reached that state of things in which special religious services are in harmony with the general feeling of a congregation; and in which strong-minded men are prepared to yield to the claims of Christ.

✓ Nor was it so with us only. It was the same in the

* The debt has been so reduced, that, on the first of April next, it will be less than seventeen thousand dollars.

other evangelical congregations of the city generally. In short, it seemed to me that nothing was wanting but more prayer, and more diligence in the membership of the churches, seconding the efforts of the ministry, to secure the blessing of a precious harvest from the whitening field in which it was our happy privilege to labor. And here let me say, that it had been my settled purpose, before I came to the city, that if I should ever see, among this people, a thoughtfulness and earnestness which should be in harmony with special and extra services, to appoint them.

Whenever it becomes manifest that the Spirit of God is moving on the minds of congregation or community, then do I believe that the truth which is adapted to save the soul should be kept before them with more than ordinary constancy. And I should be glad, moreover, if all churches might have seasons, of annual or more frequent recurrence, when, by general consent, all secular concerns should, as far as possible, be laid aside ; and a succession of days be devoted to religious instruction, and the faithful dealing of Christians with their own souls and with the souls of their neighbors. This I should be gratified with, because the effect which is produced on the minds of unconverted men in one day out of the seven, in these times of activity, multifarious temptation and worldly engrossment, is so liable to be lost in the other six ; and because, also, the custom would be in accordance with primitive practice.

Protracted meetings, as they are called, — that is to say, meetings held during a succession of days, for the special purpose of religious instruction and devotion, — so far from being a novelty of modern times, can appeal to precedent, not only in the early Christian churches, but even under the Jewish dispensation, where their di-

vine appointment is proof conclusive that they accord with the wants of our nature.

But to return to our own affairs in the beginning of the winter of 1841-2. I have already said there appeared to me a degree of interest which justified extra religious services. And I will add, that I was ready to appoint them, just so far as I should find the church prepared to sustain, and the congregation and the public to attend them. I should have been happy to give religious instruction *daily* in meetings of inquiry, and in classes for Bible studies; or to have preached to the extent of my ability.

"Why, then," it will be asked, "were you averse to the introduction of the Rev. Mr. Knapp into the city, and into your pulpit, when you believe the minds of men to have been in a state favorable to special effort for their salvation?" If in answering this question with entire frankness, I should wound the feelings of any of his friends, I shall be very sorry. I certainly shall not do it willingly.

I have already said that I believed the people of this city would bear such plain and faithful application of Gospel truth as might be adapted to awaken, reform and save, more kindly from their own pastors, — men whom they knew, — than from strangers. I should have preferred, therefore, that any public, continued labor which should have been deemed judicious, should have been conducted by the pastors of the churches, with such combination and mutual aid as the state of things should require; or, if foreign aid should have become necessary, that they should have been left at liberty to select and call for it. And now, I must frankly say, I saw no sufficient reason for calling in foreign aid; and that if I

had, I should not have been for calling in that of Mr. Knapp.

My objection to such a step rose partly from what I knew of his doctrinal sentiments; partly from his measures; partly from his spirit and temper; and partly from the consequences which I foresaw would follow their exercise in this community.

I had been acquainted with him; had followed and listened to him, constantly and closely; marked his course of procedure, and observed its effects, in another city. And notwithstanding I had heard from him a great deal which I approved, and which had done me good, my deliberate judgment was, that it was not best, in the then existing state of religious feeling in this city, and in view of the notoriety which he had acquired by his peculiarities, for him to labor here; but that if he *must* do so, a place should be furnished him by those who were desirous of his visit; where he might preach and conduct his labors without compromising the Baptist denomination, churches or pastors, any further than they might choose to engage with him.

As to his doctrinal views, my conviction was, and still is, that they are essentially at variance with those held by the churches of our denomination; that they are those not of the Baptist denomination but the Methodist.

In my view, therefore, his preaching is necessarily defective, in cutting the sinner from his legal hope, and casting him, in self-abasement, simply on the sovereign mercy of God and the atonement of Christ. And, as the truth, — the *whole* truth of the Christian doctrine, — is God's appointed means of creating and maturing the Christian character, there is always reason to fear that a

defective statement of it will be followed by defective results.

In entire consistency with his sentiments, his *measures* and his preaching were planned for appeal to the passions, and for animal excitement. Not only such topics were selected as were most strongly exciting, but also such modes of presenting them as were most likely to produce excitement. They consequently failed to commend themselves to sober and reflecting minds. It appeared to such, that he aimed at popular commotion ; that he sought to *raise*, in order that he might *ride*, a storm.

Such things I could not approve. I could not approve of inviting to this city, and especially into my own pulpit, and that too at a time when we were just in the process of formation, as a people, and when the truth preached was happily working out, as I believed, its most desirable effects, by the blessing of Him whose chosen vehicle of salvation is not the whirlwind, the earthquake and the fire, but the still small voice ; — I could not, I say, approve of inviting a man to take possession of my pulpit, who never could be satisfied without a storm, and who was known to resort to dramatic exhibitions — to eccentricities of expression, voice and manner — to assault on the usages of churches, and on the reputation of their ministers — and to public personal attacks on private character — for the purpose of raising one. Whatever good he might accomplish, I could not but believe would be better done, and less exceptionally, by those whom the churches here had called to serve them ; and I could not but apprehend that the evils would be found, in the end, to outweigh the good.

One evil to be apprehended was, that experimental

religion would be brought into discredit with that portion of the community who needed to be convinced of its reality; who would be likely to see nothing which they could not account for from the natural operation of cause and effect in the known laws of human nature; and that they who, at most, *doubted* the reality of the Holy Spirit's work before, would become *unbelievers* in it afterwards. It would also necessarily weaken the confidence of all such in the ministry itself; so that, while it would place them in a condition demanding from the ministry a still greater effort for their salvation, it would diminish the power of the ministry for making it.

Another evil to be apprehended, was the multiplication of spurious conversions. These, indeed, will always occur wherever true conversions occur in such numbers as strongly to attract attention and awaken the social sympathies. But the mischief is greatly aggravated when the functions of the ministry itself are so exercised as to give predominance to the passions. The unreflecting, the sanguine and the excitable, moved by unwonted emotions and led by example, make a profession of religion, without being truly renewed. The churches thus become burdened with a lifeless membership; cases of discipline multiply; and multitudes, after months and years of ineffectual labor, are severed from their connection, to pursue the courses which, for a time, they had forsaken; but, in a state of mind and heart fearfully more hopeless than before they made a religious profession.

Another and almost inevitable consequence to be apprehended was, the disturbance of the harmony of the churches, if not the overthrow of their discipline and the corruption of their doctrinal purity. A novel and

questionable course of measures, fundamentally affecting the interests and character of a church and society, can scarcely be introduced without griefs, and heart-burnings, and divisions, and the formation of parties; one for Paul and another for Apollos, one for Cephas, and another for Christ; inducing a distraction of mind, and a state of feeling, in which neither Paul nor Apollos, in the exercise of his ministry, could do but little good.

These consequences I particularly feared with respect to our own interests. Our church and society were new; and they were composed of persons drawn together from an unusual number and variety of religious associations. Our place of worship was a resort of persons of all varieties of religious opinions, large numbers of whom were but partially acquainted with the distinctive features of our faith and practice, and came to learn them.

If, therefore, an experiment of questionable wisdom must be tried, I could not but think, and, thinking, could not but say, it was undesirable that we should be the people to try it. Nothing else, however, would satisfy. No other position, nor all other positions, would answer. This house was the only point from which "the city could be taken." * So the house was surrendered; and the interests and character, the usefulness and happiness, of church, society and pastor, committed to the issue.

It now becomes my painful duty to state *what that issue has been*.

First, as to the *general* religious interests of the city:

* The topic of a discourse in Bowdoin Square, from Numb. xiii. 30.

it is very manifest to every observer that "the city has *not* been taken;" it has not been conquered for Christ. Instead of improvement by what has passed, the moral aspect of the community bears the marks of violence and injury. Instead of submission to the claims of religion, a wide-spread recoil has taken place in the public mind. Our population seems like a pleasure-party, which has resolved to compensate itself by a merry-making, for a fright which it has discovered to be groundless. Infidelity and Universalism, seizing on the errors and blemishes of the movement, have held experimental religion itself up to contempt; and thousands have turned from all evangelical instrumentalities, as from a detected imposture. The morals of the city have consequently been deteriorating, during the last three years, with a rapidity never before witnessed among us. Licentiousness was never so fearfully prevalent. Sabbath-breaking has become the invading nuisance of the worshipping assemblies of the city; and is flowing out from the stables, the "saloons," the hotels, the private dwellings of rich and poor, in a tide of revelry, — a pestiferous, corrupting, intolerable curse, — on the quiet and the morals of every village around us. Even the temperance reform, which, up to that period, had been advancing, has since manifestly been on the decline. While the population of the city has been increasing with unprecedented rapidity, the Sabbath attendance, in all the places of religious concourse, except those whose ministrations are opiates to fear for the consequences of sin, has been decreasing. And never before, within the memory of the present generation, was the truth apparently productive of so little effect on those

who do attend, as it has been since the excitement of that season has passed away.

That this decline in morals is *wholly* attributable to the recoil of the public mind from the movement we have been considering, I certainly do not believe, and do not intend to say. Almost contemporaneously with it was the agitation of Millerism; which, identifying itself with the evangelical forms of faith, and impiously pledging the truth of Christianity itself to the fulfilment of its predictions, served still further to alienate the popular feeling from vital religion, by confounding it with the ravings of fanaticism.

Other things also have had their influence. The teachings of men in the guise of ministers of Christ, whose weekly employment it is to distort and asperse the religion of their fathers, and to undermine the public faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures and in the judgment to come, and the war of pseudo-philanthropists against the institutions of religion, have concurred to give dreadful effect to the errors of the movement. And to these I must with sorrow add the *commentary*, which the churches themselves have given to the world, in the apathy, the irregularities, and the apostasies which have followed.

Secondly, the issue to the churches.

To state the effects of those errors on this church particularly, or on the churches of this city specifically, would be too painful, both to myself and to my hearers. I must therefore ask, that, as most of the cities and principal towns of the northern section of the country have been the theatres of the same mode of religious effort, I may be understood, in speaking of what concerns the

churches and their pastors, as having a much wider range of view than our own locality.

The first mischief has been *divisions*. Some could not but dissent from the course pursued. This brought accusations of formality, worldly policy and pride ; and the denunciations which were poured upon them from the pulpit, heard as they were with the reverence due only to inspiration, awakened a kind of horror towards them, as enemies of the work of God.

What distress, perplexity and discouragement many of the best men in the churches and in their ministry have been made to suffer, by the light in which they have been held up to their brethren and to the public, and by the feelings thus awakened towards them, only the revelations of eternity can make known. In some cases, the alienation which has taken place has led to the formation of parties in the churches ; in others, to the ejection of pastors ; in others, to attempts to get control of meeting houses and pulpits, which have resulted in rending churches asunder, and in suits at law. In other instances, where, happily, more Christian tempers have prevailed, although the churches have not been rent, their energies have been paralysed by their conflicting views of past action and present duty ; the flow of Christian sympathies has been interrupted ; and a want of interest in each other has been followed by a want of interest in the place and service of their religious solemnities.

One natural and almost universal consequence has been, a leaven of discontent, in the churches, with the stated means of grace. With those who had been most affected with the preaching of the conductor of the movement, only a particular class of subjects, and a pe-

culiar mode of treating them, would satisfy. Their own stated ministry, which was once a source of edification and enjoyment, came to be insipid. The word was heard, not for profit, but criticism; and, the bread of life being thus turned to poison, the whole head became sick and the whole heart faint. The practical duties of the Christian life were omitted; the closet was deserted; the family altar neglected; the cross was laid aside for the pleasures of the world; and gain usurped the place of godliness: till at length the only interest manifested in the subject of religion was shown in complaints of their brethren or pastors, and the only symptom of life in doubts about themselves.

Thus a general languor has crept over the church, the only remedy for which, it has been thought, is a re-enactment of the scenes of the past, or a change in the ministry. The former has been tried in some few instances, the latter in great numbers. But neither the one nor the other has seemed to reach the disease.

Another evil has been the introduction into the churches of large numbers who have proved a dishonor to religion. Unworthy persons have, it is true, found admission into churches, to some extent, at all seasons; and, whatever prudence we may exercise, they always will. But the evil, as we have already stated, is always aggravated by such an exercise of the functions of the ministry, in a time of general attention, as gives predominance to the passions. Such a ministry, at such a season, is emphatically the casting of a net for the draught of the unreflecting, the excitable, the fickle, the curious; and although their souls are as valuable as those of their fellow-creatures, yet experience has too often proved that such means are not those which are best adapted

even for their salvation. It hurries them on to a religious profession without a thorough conviction of sin, without adequate instruction, without deliberation; and, in instances of immoral life, as the churches find to their sorrow, without reform.

What mischiefs have befallen the churches in our own region from this cause, let the following facts reveal.

The additions to the churches of the Boston Association, during the year of the revival, amounted to nearly one-third of their previous number. But notwithstanding the general state of religious feeling was so favorable to the preservation of religious character, yet the number of excommunications, even during that year, was more than proportional to the increase of numbers; while in the second year it was more than one hundred per cent. beyond a due proportion. But the third year was worse than the second, and the fourth was worse than the third! What the number has been, thus far, during the current Associational year, I have not the means of knowing. But if the excommunications should continue in the ratio of the past, they will, in nine years, exceed, by three hundred and twenty-six, the whole number baptized during the year of the revival.

What injury must have been inflicted upon the churches to have produced a state of things like this! How unfavorable must have been the effect of those ministrations upon the previous membership, or else how appallingly numerous the apostasies from among the new admissions! For, unless a deterioration has taken place *in the former*, the statistical returns of the churches show that the forfeiture of Christian character among those baptized during the revival must have been, *beyond* what they *ought* to have been, if judged by the

accessions of previous years, in the proportion, for the second year, of five to one; for the third, of seven to one; and in the fourth year, of eight to one! More than two hundred and fifty persons, during the four years, were excommunicated from the churches of the Association, *over and above* the number who would have been, according to the records of discipline of the previous year, if it had not been for the manner in which they were led into a religious profession!

Many of these cases were chargeable with no immorality beyond a neglect of religious duties and covenant obligations, and a return to the fashionable amusements and worldly pleasures, which, for a time, they had forsaken. And, in this class, truth compels me to confess, are to be found some of the most ingenuous young minds in the community. And my heart sickens when I think of the effect, upon themselves and upon the circles to which they belong, that must follow. To vast numbers of others, however, it has "happened according to the true proverb: the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire;" and there is scarcely a crime in the penitentiary calendar for which the churches have not had to pass the solemn sentence of excommunication. And now let me say, that although so many of the conversions of that season have proved to have been spurious, and although I regard them as the legitimate fruits of the errors on which I have animadverted, yet I do believe there were great numbers truly born of God, and who are still bringing forth fruits meet for their repentance. Many of them were cases on which the eye of pastoral hope had long rested; and some of them, beyond a doubt, are the

fruits of the good "seed of the word which was thrown out with the chaff."

It might be supposed, from what I have said on the natural tendency and the actual results of those measures, that because so many of the conversions have proved spurious, I stand in doubt of the rest. But this is not true. My confidence in men's conversion is just in proportion to the evidence they give of having been converted; it matters not by whom, when, where, or how. If a man professes to have been awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger by a dramatic exhibition, his conversion is not to be doubted, if his life gives lucid proof that he has broken off from sin by righteousness, and given his heart to Christ. But it does not follow that, because some may have been converted by a drama, the churches may convert their houses of worship into theatres, and their ministers become tragedians. Though God is sovereign and free to educe good from evil, He has given neither his ministers nor people license to do evil that good may come.

And now let me ask those of my brethren who, beholding the languid condition of the churches, and the growing irreligion of our city, would reenact the past for a remedy, — are not the facts which we have given enough to awaken a doubt whether the man and the measures that are the objects of your desire, are indeed God's own selected instrumentalities for the salvation of your fellow citizens; for the prosperity of these churches; for the purity and the happiness of society; for honoring your Master, and giving universality to his empire? Far be it from me to use the language, or indulge the spirit of censure. I know how grateful to a Christian heart is the spectacle of multitudes thronging

the house of God, with hundreds weeping, and asking the way of life; while others are rejoicing in the hope of salvation. And I do not wonder that, having heard of such effects attending a particular ministry and a particular course of measures in other places, you should seek to have them *here*, even at the risk of some things which you might not be able to approve. And it is not surprising that, captivated by the immediate effect, you overlooked the state of the public mind at that time; the philosophy of mind, and the lessons of history; and thus failed to discern the remoter consequences to the religious convictions and susceptibilities of the community; to the piety and moral power of the churches, and to the influence and efficiency of their ministry.

But *now* that the trial has been made, and the issue seen, it does seem to me that it is time to suspect the value of this new motive power, and this improved machinery for the advancement of religion and morals; to pay some attention to the laws of the human mind, and to the nature of the forces, within and without us, which Christianity has to overcome; and that I may be allowed to call on you, and on the churches, on behalf of their calumniated ministry, to rely less on *ad captandum* expedients, and more on the dishonored POWER OF SIMPLE TRUTH, A CHRISTIAN LIFE, AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

N O T E .

Since the delivery of the foregoing discourse, the author has been informed that some of his acts during Mr. Knapp's labors in the city, seem in conflict with his statements.

A word of explanation. It is known, and but too well remembered, that the excitement of the popular feeling against him while preaching at the Square, rose to riot ; that fears were entertained for his personal safety, and for the safety of the house ; and that after the police had proved insufficient, the city authorities ordered an armed interference for the dispersion of the rioters. The author, worn out with anxieties, and with endeavors to prevent what harm and do what good he might, had left the meetings. But on learning the state of things at the Square, and the fears entertained of the prevalence of violence over law, he felt himself compelled to leave his sick chamber, to appear in the pulpit ; and, at whatever cost or peril, to stand for the defence of the freedom of religious worship, for the maintenance of law, and for the personal safety of the object of the popular displeasure.

It is true, therefore, that he was present, *prominent* and *active*, in the darkest of those gloomy hours. It is also true that he is responsible for Mr. Knapp's return to the Square, to close his labors. The city authorities, censured for the measures which they had employed to give effect to the police, had said, the author understood, that the house must be closed ; as they could not longer be responsible for the safety of the property ! The retirement of Mr. Knapp from the Square, therefore, under such circumstances, was calculated to have all the bad effects of a triumph of mob law.

In this, for one, the author could not acquiesce. He could not consent to have such power given to the element of insubordination in the

community, — such a wound to religious freedom, — such a stain to the reputation of our city; and he invited him back, to close his labors in the city at the Square. If it was wrong for him to do so, at the risk of what might recur, he will only plead his love of *liberty* and *law*.

As to the objection to the public address and the parting hand given on the occasion of his closing service, he will only say, that, as he understands Christian charity, it “suffereth long and is kind; and doth not behave itself unseemly.” He believed Mr. Knapp, with all his faults, to be a Christian, and a well-meaning, though an erring man; and throughout his occupancy of the public attention in the city, the author felt it his duty to render that occupancy, as far as it was in his power to do so, the occasion of good to his fellow citizens and his fellow Christians. The diligent mariner, who encounters inauspicious gales, instead of sullenly casting anchor, will endeavor to subsidize the wind he can neither repress nor control, and steer as near his course as he can.

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